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UNESCO INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON LITERACY (SECOND SESSION, PARIS, 29 NOV-8 DEC 1965). FINAL REPORT.

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DESCRIPTORS- #INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS, #LITERACY EDUCATION, #VOCATIONAL EDUCATION, #DEVELOPING NATIONS, #PILOT PROJECTS, MASS MEDIA, PROGRAM EVALUATION, FINANCIAL SUPPORT, TEACHING METHODS, FEMALES, REGIONAL COOPERATION, UNESCO, TEHERAN CONGRESS,

INTERNATIONAL MEETINGS ORGANIZED BY UNESCO, PARTICULARLY THE TEHERAN CONGRESS, HAVE PUBLICIZED THE LINK BETWEEN LITERACY WORK AND ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE NEED FOR THE REVISION OF PRIORITIES. ACTION IS NOW NEEDED. UNESCO'S EFFORT TO ERADICATE ILLITERACY ASSUMES THREE FORMS--(1) CONDUCTING PILOT EXPERIMENTAL PROJECTS RELATED TO THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE COUNTRY, (2) SUPPORTING ACTIVITIES UNDERTAKEN BY GOVERNMENT AND PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS, AND (3) WORKING OUT PRACTICAL METHODS FOR USE IN LITERACY TEACHING AND ADULT EDUCATION. A FUNCTIONAL RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LIFELONG EDUCATION AND TECHNICAL AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING MUST BE ESTABLISHED, CONSIDERING THE LOCAL CONDITIONS AND COMMUNITIES CONCERNED. MODERN MASS COMMUNICATION--PRESS, RADIO, RADIOVISION, AND TELEVISION--WILL PROVIDE NEW AND POWERFUL MEANS. IT IS HOPED THAT DATA DERIVED FROM EXPERIMENTAL PROGRAMS WILL SERVE AS A GUIDE FOR ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED INDEPENDENTLY OF UNESCO AND FINANCED OTHERWISE THAN BY THE SPECIAL FUND. EVALUATION, BOTH ECONOMIC AND SOCIOLOGICAL, IS THE MAIN ASPECT OF TH EXPERIMENTAL WORK AND WILL BE CARRIED OUT BY TEAMS WORKING PERMANENTLY IN THE FIELD AND BY RESEARCH INSTITUTES AND UNIVERSITIES. EVALUATIVE DATA SHOULD BE COLLECTED FOR ANALYSIS AND WIDE DISSEMINATION BY THE INTERNATIONAL CLEARING HOUSE. (LIST OF PARTICIPANTS AND AGENDA ARE INCLUDED.) (AJ)

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UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL,
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INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON LITERACY

Second Session

Paris, 29 November-8 December 1965

FINAL REPORT

INTRODUCTION

At its twelfth session, the General Conference of Unesco adopted a resolution (12 C/Resolutions, 1.2533(d)) authorizing the Director-General to establish an International Committee of Experts on Literacy. At its thirteenth session, the General Conference authorized the Director-General to increase the number of experts sitting on that Committee from 18 to 24. The Committee held its second session at Unesco Headquarters from 29 November to 8 December 1965. A list of the members and observers present is given in Annex I.

The Committee's Officers were as follows:

Chairman:	Mr. Cissé Ben Mady (Senegal)
Vice-Chairmen:	Mr. Felix Adam (Venezuela) Mr. Miguel B. Gaffud (Philippines)
Rapporteur:	Mr. Philippe Dechartre (France)

At the first meeting, Mr. A. Matveyev, Assistant Director-General for Science, represented the Director-General, who was absent on mission. On his return to the Organization's Headquarters before the end of the session, the Director-General made a point of expressing personally to the Committee his gratitude for its contribution to Unesco's programme; he then described the Organization's tasks at the present stage of the programme and outlined future prospects in the campaign against illiteracy.

After the seating of the Officers, the Committee proceeded to the discussion of its agenda, as set out in Annex II.

CHAPTER I

WORLD LITERACY PROGRAMME

The Committee reviewed Unesco's activities in the field of literacy since its previous meeting in April 1964. As shown by document LIT/EX/65/5, which was studied by the Committee, those activities had been many and varied.

The Committee considered in detail all the activities referred to in the report (LIT/EX/65/6) on the progress made in the implementation of the World Literacy Programme and expressed its satisfaction with the work done by the Secretariat.

At the theoretical level, the Committee unanimously and unequivocally reaffirmed its acceptance of the concept of functional literacy.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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The international and regional meetings organized by or with the assistance of Unesco, particularly the Teheran Congress, had made world opinion aware of the principle of the link between literacy work and economic, social and cultural development, and of the need for planning and for the revision of priorities. Emphasis had been laid on integrating this overall programme in the network of international co-operation, and on the solidarity which should exist between developing countries and industrialized countries in their efforts to resolve a problem of equal moment to both groups.

The Committee stressed the practical results of the Teheran Congress, namely:

(i) The acquisition of a new stock of information.

(ii) The co-ordination of the efforts of governmental and non-governmental organizations in the World Literacy Programme.

(iii) The possibility of exchanging critical analyses of the experiments already carried out, which would facilitate the preparation of a world chart of the various operations conducted in Member States.

(iv) The new trend towards an increase in national resources and investments for literacy programmes.

(v) The greater attention paid to literacy problems by legislators in the various countries.

(vi) The active publicity and propaganda resulting in the establishment of national committees and councils, and in the launching of mass movements.

(vii) The increased mobilization of resources for the implementation of the Experimental World Literacy Programme.

(viii) The co-ordination of mutual aid between developing countries.

(ix) The rational co-ordination of activities and initiatives in the field of multilateral and bilateral aid.

The Committee learned with satisfaction that the governments of a number of countries had endorsed the conclusions of the Teheran Congress and had already begun to apply them in practice.

Unesco's work plans for 1966 were also expounded and discussed. The Committee gave its full support to the activities proposed.

The Committee was informed of the general outlines of the Draft Programme for 1967-1968. It expressed its satisfaction at the general trend of the next phase of the activities undertaken, and at the suggestions contained in the conclusions.

In the course of a discussion on the efficiency of consultation procedures, the Director-General asked the Committee whether, in its opinion, the rationalization of the work to be done did not call for the merging of the three existing advisory committees (adult education, out-of-school education of youth, and literacy).

The experts unanimously agreed that it would be advisable to maintain the advisory committee specializing in literacy work. Most of them considered that in view of the specific nature of that committee's work, it would be better not to envisage the merging of the three committees at the present crucial moment when tactics had to take over from strategy.

Some of the experts, however, agreed that from the logical angle and in order to concentrate efforts, it might be preferable to merge them. Others thought that while it might perhaps be advisable to combine the committee for adult education with the committee for literacy work, the committee for youth should be maintained in its present form. The general feeling that seemed to emerge from the discussion was that a merger, even if desirable, would in any case be premature at the present juncture.

With regard to the proposal for the creation of a different body, under the name of Liaison Committee for the Literacy Programme, the experts felt that they were insufficiently informed to be able to express an opinion on the matter.

The Committee heard two statements on the missions which had visited Cuba and the Philippines to study the methods and techniques employed in those countries for the eradication of illiteracy, and was glad to note that the results of the experiments described in the reports drawn up by the missions and submitted to the governments for their comments would be made available to those concerned.

The Committee heard with satisfaction the communications by the representatives of the United Nations Special Fund, ILO and FAO, since a functional literacy strategy was inconceivable unless those Specialized Agencies gave the work their full backing.

The Committee noted the presence of the representatives of non-governmental organizations. With their large membership, the latter played an essential part in disseminating the dynamic ideas capable of motivating literacy campaigns; while certain of them, because of their specialized nature, would continue to give specific practical assistance in the preparation and implementation of national literacy programmes.

CONCLUSIONS

The Committee recalls that:

functional literacy, as a concept, is regarded as being complementary to school education and as being integrated in the general educational plan and correlated with national plans for economic, social and cultural development;

the action undertaken to eradicate illiteracy should be the concern of all mankind, and should be conducted on a world scale, through the concerted efforts of the international community;

these principles have been confirmed by the conclusions of the Teheran Congress and by the Executive Board and the General Conference of Unesco, and have received the support of the United Nations General Assembly.

The Committee considers that:

although priority should be given to the launching and implementation of pilot experimental projects, Unesco should, at the same time, play a leading part in promoting literacy work on a world scale and, when requested to do so, grant all possible assistance to the programmes and countries in need of it, co-operating closely for that purpose with the international organizations concerned;

if literacy is a priority field, all Unesco's appropriate resources should be mobilized and made available for the literacy programme in the coming years;

owing to the tremendous amount of work remaining to be done, the Department of Adult Education and Youth Activities should be strengthened by the addition of several staff members and should benefit by the constant collaboration of specialists belonging to other departments and services of the Secretariat; this might entail a rearrangement of the working machinery within the Secretariat;

it is highly desirable for Unesco to co-operate with non-governmental organizations, whose rôle is essential, in order that they may continue to mobilize their means of action and their resources;

it is important not only to maintain the various Unesco publications dealing with literacy, but also to improve them; the International Journal of Adult and Youth Education should be revived, to serve as a permanent liaison and information bulletin for the literacy programme;

there is a growing need for the establishment of a World Clearing House where information would be collected, analysed and redistributed to all appropriate individuals and organizations, and made available to Member States.

CHAPTER II

IMPLEMENTATION OF EXPERIMENTAL PROJECTS

Unesco's essential rôle in efforts to eradicate illiteracy at present assumes the following three forms: (a) conducting pilot projects viewed in relation to the economic and social development of the country concerned; (b) supporting activities undertaken in the various countries by the government authorities or by private institutions and non-governmental organizations; (c) working out practical methods for use in literacy teaching and adult education; this latter task is particularly important owing to the inadequacy of knowledge and practical experience which has been thoroughly weighed and studied.

(a) Pilot experimental projects

The Committee studied the projects proposed for the Experimental World Literacy Programme, a summary of which is contained in document LIT/EX/65/6; it also discussed in detail the "Guide for the preparation of pilot experimental literacy projects" (document LIT/EX/65/7). The Committee expressed its approval of those two documents, to which it made a few minor amendments. The problem that arrested its attention most was the rôle, composition and working methods of the exploratory planning missions sent by Unesco to countries wishing to take part in the experimental programme.

(b) Extended action

With regard to extended action for the furtherance of literacy programmes other than experimental ones, the Committee singled out and studied four possibilities of aid or international mutal aid, namely: mutual aid and exchanges between developing countries, bilateral aid, multilateral aid, and non-governmental action. In addition, there are all the possible combinations of these four types of action.

Thus, the Committee took note of the work undertaken by regional centres and national institutions. It also noted the example of the proposed Arab regional literacy fund as a form of co-operation and solidarity between countries which themselves need assistance in this field.

Since the extension of literacy work makes it a matter of urgency to raise additional funds, one of the Committee's members made the following proposal: in order to secure new resources for its efforts in this field, Unesco might explore the possibility of creating a working capital fund, separate from the Special Fund and supplied by voluntary contributions (from Member States or from private foundations and organizations) and administered by an appropriate international body. The Committee thought that it would not be advisable to include this proposal in the conclusions of its report but that, in view of the interest it had aroused during the discussion, it should be submitted to the various organs of Unesco for consideration.

(c) Methods

The Committee studied the problem of methods. It strongly and clearly emphasized the connexions, similarities and convergences between school education and literacy work and their necessary interdependence. For literacy work is one phase of a general strategy which supports it and goes beyond it; it is an aspect of lifelong education.

Furthermore, the Committee shared the experts' view that women can and should play an outstanding part in all literacy activities. For not only do women exert an influence on the family and on society which is of capital importance in enlisting public support for a literacy campaign, but they are an essential human factor in social and economic development.

The Committee tackled the problem of new methods corresponding to a new strategy in literacy work.

It pointed out that it was fully aware of the practical difficulties which would inevitably arise as soon as the operational stage was reached.

It mentioned some of the problems which would be met with in the field, with the idea not of solving them at once - which would have been impossible - but of tackling the question lucidly from a general angle.

The Committee therefore discussed the following practical problems:

what languages to use in literacy work;

how to organize global literacy instruction in factories, covering both the cultural and the professional aspects;

how to persuade industrialists and agriculturists that literacy work is a means of increasing productivity;

the problem of motivation for taking literacy courses;

determination of the obstacles to literacy instruction and of ways of removing them;

determination of the critical stages to be passed in the continuing process of literacy education;

the need to use new techniques in order to achieve the "industrialization" of literacy work in underdeveloped areas.

This list - by no means exhaustive - of specific, concrete questions enabled the Committee to make a general study of new methods.

For at a time when the most pressing need is to take action, it must be recognized that certain concepts of literacy work are outdated. A new strategy means that the choice of methods must be viewed from a new angle. The tools required for literacy must be given to the millions of people in need of them, in order not only that they may learn to read and write, but also, and above all, that they may have access to vocational and technical training. To be able to get beyond the handicrafts stage, overcome obstacles and break down barriers and opposition, it is essential to use tactics relying on the psychological mobilization of the peoples and the powerful intervention of mass movements. It should be added that literacy is a means of communication and that it is therefore impossible to conceive of a modern strategy of literacy work without resorting to the modern techniques of mass communication. It was made quite clear, in this connexion, that the reference to the most modern mass communication media - radio, radiovision and television - should not cause the contribution which the press can make to a literacy campaign to be forgotten.

Finally, recognizing that the utilization of the various techniques, media and methods in literacy work is something that has not yet been sufficiently investigated, it was pointed out that all modern communication media - radio, radiovision, television and the press - could be used at different stages of literacy work, but that it was important to provide for the combined use of traditional and modern methods as well as for that of the various audio-visual methods.

The Committee next discussed the question of the use of machines and programmed instruction. It fully realized that it is difficult, without further knowledge and experience, and for reasons of methods and cost price, to resort to programmed instruction in literacy work; it would appear easier to use it in technical and vocational training.

CONCLUSIONS

The Committee:

emphasizes the fact that exploratory missions should help governments not only to draw up requests to the Special Fund, but also to frame national literacy programmes and plans for adult education;

stresses the need to see that the experts going on these missions are thoroughly briefed;

considers that it might be desirable to add a research and evaluation expert to exploratory missions consisting of an economist and an educator specializing in educational planning;

approves, subject to certain changes, the "Provisional Guide for the preparation of pilot experimental literacy projects" which contains the necessary directives for members of exploratory missions, and recommends, in particular, that the criteria for the drawing up of governments' requests to the Special Fund be clearly defined;

considers it desirable, whenever possible, for multilateral and bilateral aid to be co-ordinated advantageously; for example:

(a) bilateral aid programmes can assume responsibility for technical assistance in an experimental project which does not receive aid from the Special Fund;

(b) bilateral aid can be included in a pilot experimental project which also benefits by multilateral aid;

(c) experts in bilateral and multilateral aid can, with the approval of the government to which they are assigned, co-operate fruitfully with one another;

(d) projects for research and action can be undertaken by institutes and universities within the framework of an experimental project;

(e) international training courses and seminars can be organized through bilateral aid;

considers that, in view of the invaluable assistance which can be given by the United Nations Specialized Agencies and the cordial spirit of co-operation which they have already shown, the projects ought to be conducted and implemented in close co-operation with them;

considers also that intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, with their large membership and specialized knowledge, should be asked to play an important part, in collaboration with Unesco, in the spread of dynamic ideas capable of motivating literacy campaigns, and in the organization and actual conduct of literacy activities;

recalls that, in all countries, national or international plans for education should include adult education and that, in countries with a high illiteracy rate, prominence should be given to literacy work; similarly, every economic planning project should include literacy teaching and adult education;

emphasizes that action along functional lines calls for co-ordination between literacy work and education, which may lead planners to give fresh thought to the problems of school education;

reaffirms that women always have a part to play in every kind of literacy work;

strongly emphasizes that a new strategy calls for new methods, i.e. that it is important to employ all the means likely to establish a more functional relationship between literacy work, lifelong education and technical and vocational training, and to adapt these means to the local conditions and communities concerned; if properly used, modern techniques of mass communication - press, radio, radiovision and television - will also provide new and powerful means, whose effectiveness has not yet been fully gauged;

considers it highly desirable for Unesco to develop its activities in breadth and in depth, undertake specific research on appropriate means and methods, and conduct experiments in order to evaluate existing methods;

points out that it would be useful to make a systematic collection of critical documentation on literacy experiments based on the use of audio-visual methods and mass communication media (press, radio, radiovision and television); this documentation should be analysed so as to shed light on the cost, profitability and educational results of these operations;

recommends the establishment of a working party to assist the Secretariat in making a more efficient study of the use of new methods in a new literacy strategy.

CHAPTER III

EVALUATION

Having evolved a literacy doctrine, Unesco is now preparing to put it into practice. The proposed programme is called experimental because it sets out to test the exactness of certain approaches and the worth of certain methods. But the programme is of far more general interest than its actual scope might imply, and it is hoped that the data derived from the experiments undertaken will serve as a guide for other activities conducted independently of Unesco and financed otherwise than by the Special Fund.

Evaluation is therefore the main aspect of this experimental work, of which it forms a permanent and essential part.

To put it in a nutshell, evaluation is, to some extent, the raison d'être of the experimental programme.

The Committee therefore discussed the problems posed by the evaluation of pilot projects, and specified that no dividing line should be drawn between research problems and those of quantitative and qualitative evaluation.

The Committee made it quite clear, however, that sociological evaluation is just as important as economic evaluation, since the benefits of literacy are cultural as well as economic. In fact, culture is an indivisible whole. Yet no culture is secure from deterioration and only the introduction of a vitalizing factor into the social life of a group can obviate all risk of lethargy.

Therefore the problem is not only to measure, as part of a given experiment, the effects of literacy on economic development against the yardstick of investment and return, but also, and concurrently, to measure changes in the behaviour patterns of men and women belonging to traditional societies when they cross the threshold and make a place for themselves in modern societies, thereby forsaking oral for written civilizations.

Although it is desirable to measure any quantitative change, it is even more important to see whether, thanks to functional literacy, there is a positive change in the collective attitude of the human group in question.

Social scientists are now in a position to measure this cultural aspect, and methods and tools for the purpose exist.

At all events, this aspect of evaluation puts the matter in its right perspective for it is obvious that any cultural change brings about an economic change. Besides, what matters more than anything else in literacy is that it enables people, who have never yet had an opportunity to do so, to understand the world and to communicate with their fellow men. That is the supreme objective; it is a moral right, a principle and an end more important than any considerations of economic development.

Finally the Committee studied document LIT/EX/65/8, entitled "Draft outline for a Guide on the Evaluation of Experimental Projects in the World Literacy Programme". This document, which was prepared by a group of specialists from various departments of Unesco, will shortly be submitted to a Committee of Experts on Evaluation.

CONCLUSIONS

The Committee:

much appreciates the work which has gone into the "Guide on the Evaluation of Experimental Projects in the World Literacy Programme" and supports the Secretariat in its desire to draw up, on the basis of this Guide, a more comprehensive manual on ways and means of evaluating experimental projects and measuring their results;

endorses the findings of the experts, who stressed the fact that evaluation has at once an economic and a sociological aspect, literacy being a process of social change;

The Committee specified that:

measurement and evaluation should be a continuing activity, an integral part of the project throughout its implementation;

evaluation should be applied to pilot projects and even, should the countries so desire, to national programmes;

from the point of view of methods, the objectives of evaluation should be defined at the preparatory stage of the pilot project, a point at which assistance from the Special Fund would be desirable;

because of the need for objective and scientific diagnosis, experts entrusted with the actual conduct of the project should not also be responsible for evaluating them; that was a task for other experts; it was obvious that they would undertake the evaluation in close collaboration and harmony with their colleagues responsible for the conduct of the operations;

owing to the need for specialized personnel, who were difficult to recruit, it seemed reasonable to provide for the following organization:

(a) the setting up within the Secretariat of a group of experts on evaluation meeting at the highest level, whose members might be called upon to undertake missions for on-the-spot consultation with those responsible for the projects; one of their duties would be to advise the evaluation teams working permanently in the field;

(b) the permanent evaluation teams assigned to experimental projects might be made up of national and international specialists;

(c) research institutes and universities in the countries where projects were being carried out, as well as those of other countries, might be called upon to co-operate in that work and provide evaluation teams;

data derived from the evaluation of experimental projects should be collected for analysis and wide dissemination by the International Clearing House.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

Before concluding its work, the Committee endorsed the idea expressed in his speech by Mr. René Maheu, Director-General of Unesco:

"Action must take precedence. Now that it has become aware of the problem, the world is athirst for action. We can no longer continue merely to denounce illiteracy and pursue our studies on literacy methods. We must now go into action, begin field work, provide literacy instruction. I think that this will confront the Secretariat with very weighty problems. We are about to enter the operational phase. We can already foresee that, next year, Unesco may be entrusted with four, five or even six Special Fund projects, and this will entail a very profound change in our usual methods of work and will certainly raise considerable administrative problems.

We cannot speak of illiteracy as we speak of other problems. Literacy work leads us to the very root of the evil inherent in societies and in the legacy of the past. It is one of the most important undertakings whose consequences may truly revolutionize Man's rule on earth. The solution of this problem must therefore be sought with infinite care and clear-sightedness. Efficiency must henceforth be the prime consideration, but, at the same time, it is not possible to deal with this problem without a degree of emotional drive."

ANNEX I

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VIII. LIST OF SECRETARIAT MEMBERS

Mr. René Maheu, Director-General

Professor Alexey Matveyev, Assistant Director-General for Science

Mr. Aser Deleon, Director, Department of Adult Education and Youth Activities

Mr. John Bowers, Assistant-Director " " " " " "

Mr. T. Guiga, " " " " " "

Mr. P. Vagliani, " " " " " "

Mr. F. Valderrama, " " " " " "

Mr. H. Cassirer, Department of Mass Communication.

ANNEX II

INTERNATIONAL COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON LITERACY

Second Session, Unesco Headquarters, 29 November-8 December 1965

AGENDA

1. Election of Chairman
2. Election of two Vice-Presidents and a Rapporteur
3. Unesco activities on literacy since the last meeting of the Committee
4. The Teheran Congress: analysis and projection
5. Preparation of projects in countries requesting to take part in the Experimental Literacy Programme
6. Assistance to literacy projects in countries which will not participate in the Experimental Programme
7. New methods in view of the new strategy in literacy
8. Evaluation of literacy projects
9. Unesco's 1967-1968 proposed programme for literacy
10. Consideration of the eventual modifications of the composition and rôle of the Committee in order to reinforce its co-operation with the Secretariat
11. Any other business.

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